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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY,
FEBRUARY 25, 2003

1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for February 25, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICS, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

2. Bolge/Milli Gazete/Milliyet: In his written statement, Saban Bas, the President of Adana's Chamber of Commerce, said that since it is impossible to avert the possible war on Iraq investment should continue so that the war would not have a negative impact on the economy. Bas said the war should not cast a shadow over the economy, and that no one has the luxury of forgetting the impact of the 1991 Gulf War. Milliyet reports that Mr. Bas claimed Turkey's losses due to the 1991 war and post-war crisis were between 100-150 billion dollars and that Adana's exports dropped to 3 million dollars from 20-25 million dollars.

3. Turkiye: The first group of 210 Dutch soldiers assigned to work on the Patriot air defense systems sent to Turkey by Holland will arrive this week. The second group of the total 360 soldiers will leave Holland for Turkey on February 28. The Dutch soldiers will land in Adana and be dispatched to Diyarbakir and Batman. The Patriot air defense systems sent by freight ships by the Government of Holland are expected to arrive in Turkey shortly.

4. Turkiye/Tercuman/Dunya: 80 Turkish Red Crescent(Kizilay) officials who will help refugees in the possible war on Iraq departed Ankara for Silopi. Some 51 Kizilay official had been moved to the region earlier. Together with Kizilay personnel, 29 cars carrying communication devices, ambulances, and assorted equipment were dispatched to the region.

5. Tercuman: The Iraqi Opposition's meeting in Northern Iraq was postponed due to adverse weather conditions. The meeting is rescheduled for February 28. A total of 366 reporters, including 242 foreign reporters with accreditation, will pass from Habur Border gate to Northern Iraq to follow the meeting in Selahaddin town under IKDP's control. About 50 persons from opposition groups are expected to attend the meeting.

6. Tercuman: It is reported that the first US military unit will land in Gaziantep. Preparations have been made for landing of six thousand US soldiers at Gaziantep airport. It is claimed that the land around the airport has been rented for setting up desert tents. Soldiers from the famed 101st Airborne Brigade are expected to be deployed in Gaziantep.

7. Evrensel: In Batman, people talk about the war at every opportunity, and at night protest the US by participating in the nationwide "turning lights on and off" campaign. In Batman, shopkeepers are affected most from the preparations for the war because of stagnation in commerce because missile defense systems had been deployed behind Batman's industrial site.

8. Cumhuriyet: While US preparations for the war on Iraq are intensified, people in the Southeast

have already started to suffer. The oil tankers bringing oil from Northern Iraq to Turkey form long queues at the border. Tanker drivers claimed that 130 km trips required all of 10 days because of intensified traffic due to US convoys. In the meantime, one segment of the people suffering badly from the war are merchants, who said because of the uncertainty added to the existing economic crises they have no customers and have closed their doors.

19. Radikal: In addition to military equipment brought to the Iskenderun port under the modernization program, a second freighter named Antares (Norwegian-flagged) unloaded 310 pieces of military equipment and 52 military vehicles. Activities were also seen at warehouses rented by Americans.

10. Milliyet: The Executive Board President of Adana's Environment and Consumer Protection Association, and East Mediterranean Environment Associations' Representative for Adana, Attorney Remzi Umit Akay, said the possible war on Iraq would not only kill people but also damage the ecosystem because of the chemical weapons that would be used. Akay said that war was a crime, and Turkey should not become a partner in this crime, and added that the ones who counted each death in this war would feel that every bomb was thrown at their conscience.

11. Bolge: The President of Mersin's Chamber of Maritime Trade, Cihat Lokmanoglu, announced that because of its position, location, and distance to Asia, Europe, and Africa continents, the port of Mersin was the most important sea gate of the Eastern Mediterranean and Turkey. It was expressed that the tourism potential in Antalya should be carried over to the Mersin region and the maritime transportation between Antalya and Mersin should definitely be established. In order to enliven sea tourism in the province, Lokmanoglu opined that the 500-yacht-capacity Mersin marina and 200-yacht-capacity Kumkuyu marina currently under construction should be completed as soon as possible. Lokmanoglu also said that in addition to its rich natural resources, history, and culture, Mersin was important for its proximity to other historical and tourist sites such as Kapadokya and Hatay. He added that fast ferryboat transportation between neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Syria and Israel.

HOLTZ